Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Culture, Language, and Economic Differences

Culture is the sum total of experiences, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and interests represented by the diversity of students and adults in our schools. While culture is often defined and perceived by schools as the celebration of important people, religions, traditions, and holidays, as well as an appreciation of the customs of different groups, it is also more than that. Culture is as much, or as little, as the everyday experiences, people, events, smells, sounds, and habits of behavior that characterize students' and educators' lives. Culture shapes a person's sense of who they are and where they fit in their family, community, and society.

Helping learners make the link between their culture and the new knowledge and skills they encounter inside school is at the heart of ensuring that all students achieve at high levels. In addition, appreciation of diverse cultures is a philosophical concept built on the American ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity. This is acknowledged in documents as varied as the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Why is it important for educators to know and understand diverse cultures?

Knowledge and understanding of the varied cultures represented in our public schools:

a) affirms our need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world;

b) recognizes the role schools play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society;

c) values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect; and

d) challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of social justice.

Enduring Understanding:

Effective teachers of low-income and/or culturally and linguistically diverse students find ways to connect school to their students' lives every day.

Optimal instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students:

- contextualizes or connects to students' everyday experiences, and
- integrates classroom learning with out-of-school experiences and knowledge of life inside the community.

Why is an understanding of the role of culture in learning so important now?

Most educators across the country, whether rural, suburban, or urban, can attest to the changing demographics in America's schools. About two of every five public school students are Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander or American Indian/Alaska Native. The urgency for educators to expand their understanding of the role of culture in learning is increased by recent findings that "when students of color are taught with culturally responsive techniques…their academic performance improves significantly" (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). Yet, there are not enough educators of color to accomplish this task; 90 percent of the public school teaching force is white. This long standing disproportion led Paul Barton of the Educational

Testing Service to declare 10 years ago that, "all schools must support their teachers, no matter what race and culture, to become more knowledgeable about diversity so they can be better equipped to work with the changing student populations in their classrooms" (quoted in Coker-Kolo, 2002). This need for the enrichment of all educators' knowledge- and skill-base is even more pressing today as the demand for the closing of the student achievement gaps abounds.

CREDE Standards for Culture

- **Contextualization:** Connect teaching and curriculum to the experiences, values, knowledge, and needs of students.
- **Learning through Observation-Modeling:** Promote student learning through observation by modeling behaviors, thinking processes, and procedures.

How is culture connected to language?

The primary medium of culture is language. How a child or adult processes his or her unique values, beliefs, everyday experiences, and childrearing conventions is mediated through their primary or home language. Thus, in a learning environment that increases the connection between home and school culture, students benefit from:

a) some use of home language and culture especially in the instruction of English Language Learners;

b) opportunities for student-directed activities;

c) teaching strategies that enhance understanding; and

d) parent and community engagement in the education of their children.

We recognize the difficulty of involving culturally and linguistically diverse parents and community members, yet students thrive when we are successful in engaging the important adults in their lives. Developing a curriculum that promotes interaction between students and their families can go a long way toward creating a culturally responsive school and high-achieving classroom.

What can educators do?

Developing cultural sensitivity and competence can be both a difficult challenge and an exciting opportunity for expanding one's knowledge, skills, and beliefs. Training and professional development opportunities can be sought for school, district, and state level educators. NEA offers cultural diversity training that can help staff recognize the value of multicultural literacy and create an environment that is supportive of multiple perspectives, experiences, and democracy. Diversity training and the necessary self-reflection and persistent engagement with arising issues that follow can result in equitable education opportunities for students and significant personal and professional growth for educators.

Educators who understand culture can help students develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups. Thus, schooling has the potential to lay the foundation for eliminating all forms of discrimination and intolerance.

High expectations communicated regularly and consistently to students affect the achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Students in classrooms in which educators encourage them and expect excellence from them do, indeed, excel. And, students learn best when they understand the larger purpose or meaning for their learning — when they know why they have to learn something, and it's not just for the test.

Why is advocating for the understanding of the culture of our students important?

Understanding culture in our schools advances the practice of placing students and their life histories and experiences at the

center of the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, infusing cultural knowledge into instruction promotes pedagogy that occurs in a context that is familiar to students and that addresses multiple ways of thinking. As advocates for cultural understanding, teachers and students join as partners in critically analyzing oppression and power relations in their communities, society, and the world.

This chapter offers principles and strategies that begin to address the issues raised here. They help you to understand and to teach from the answers to the following questions:

1. What is culture?
2. How does culture shape identity?
3. What is culturally responsive teaching?
4. How can teachers effectively build upon students' cultural identities to facilitate learning?

The principles and strategies in this guide are only an initial step on a longer journey toward cultural competence, multicultural awareness, and a social justice perspective in your teaching. Our intent is to open a door to what is possible in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Culture References:

Doyin O. Coker-Kolo, "A Systems Analysis Approach To Integrating Cultural Diversity into Colleges of Education," *Multicultural Perspectives* 4(2):35-39.

National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, *Assessment of Diversity in America's Teaching Force: A Call to Action*, (Washington, D.C.: National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). www.communityteachers.org

NEA Human and Civil Rights offers a variety of trainings and materials that can help educators and education support professionals work more effectively with culturally diverse students and families. Provided by experienced trainers from the Diversity Training Cadre and/or NEA staff, training modules include:

- Understanding Cultural Diversity
- Developing Cultural Identity
- Reacting to Differences
- Valuing Diversity in the NEA
- Our Diverse Community: Living, Working, and Learning Together — A Diversity Module for NEA Education Support Professionals

To request Diversity Training, contact:

Patricia A. Wright, Ed.D.
Diversity Training Coordinator
pwright@nea.org

or

Monique Bailey
Senior Administrative Assistant
mbailey@nea.org

Educator Check-In on Culture (How Am I Doing?)

Directions: Review the list below. Place a check by those items you practice on a consistent basis. Feel free to discuss these items with your colleagues to expand your practice.

1. ____I know the cultural background of each of my students and use this knowledge as a resource for instructional activities.
2. ____I know the culture of my classroom environment and how it affects all of my students.
3. ____ I design lessons that require students to identify and describe another point of view, different factors, consequences, objectives, or priorities.
4. ____ I integrate literature and resources from my students' cultures into my lessons.
5. ____ I know the English language level of each of my students, using language assessments such as Bilingual Syntax Measure, Woodcock-Munoz, or other diagnostic tools.
6. ____ I provide instruction that helps to increase the awareness and valuing of differences through the study of historical, current, community, family, and personal events, and literature.
7. ____ I consistently begin my lessons with what students already know from home, community, and school.
8. ____ I design my instructional activities in ways that are meaningful to students in terms of their local community norms and knowledge.
9. ____ I incorporate local norms and perspectives into my classroom instruction on a daily basis by talking to students, parents, and community members, and reading relevant documents.
10. ____ I collaborate with students to design activities that build on community resources and knowledge.
11. ____ I provide opportunities for parents to participate in classroom instructional activities.
12. ____ I vary activities to address students' learning styles. (e.g., multiple intelligences, differentiated instruction).
13. ____ I understand the differences between school academic language and my students' social language, and I use techniques to bridge between the two.

Priorities for my own professional development

Based on the educator check–in, identify three priorities for your own professional development.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Culture: Approaches, Strategies, and Activities At-a-Glance

Approaches	Strategies	Activity Number
Establish a Community of Learners and Leaders	Incorporate student perspectives in creating a classroom community	1. Community Agreements, page 2-6
	Establish classroom procedures and routines	2. Template for Procedures Lesson, page 2-6
	Identify unspoken classroom cultural norms and assumptions	3. Educator Reflection—Mismatches in Cultural Expectations, page 2-7 4. Educator Reflection—Power Relationships, page 2-9
Know Your Students and Families	Gather student/community data	5. Student Data Gathering Instrument, page 2-11
	Implement community service projects	6. Community-Based Projects, page 2-13
	Engage families as a resource for learning.	7. Features of Culture, page 2-14
	Establish positive communication with families	8. Educator Reflection—Parent Interviews, page 2-19
	Explore cultural identity	9. What's in My Name?, page 2-20 10. "I am from…." Statements, page 2-22

Ready-to-Use Approaches, Strategies, and Activities

Activity #1
Community Agreements

This activity can help each diverse student feel a part of the classroom community, especially if the teacher elicits a response from each child regardless of physical, academic, or language ability.

Lesson Preparation

Grades:	K-12
Duration:	10-30 minutes
Grouping:	Whole class
Materials:	Chart paper, pens
Objective:	Co-create community agreements/classroom norms between teacher and students.
Assessment:	All students participate in the process.

Lesson Delivery

Briefing

1. Give students the objectives of the lesson (e.g., Today we are going to think about how we want to treat each other).
2. Briefly explain "the how" (e.g., We are going to develop a list of classroom norms).

Instructional Frame

1. Ask students to brainstorm the following prompt:

   What would help us work best together in the classroom?

2. Teacher records responses on chart paper.
3. Teacher and students work together to categorize the responses into community agreements/norms for the classroom.
4. Teacher and/or students rewrite the classroom norms onto a chart to be displayed in the classroom at students' eye level. For English language learners, be sure to include simple pictures/graphics to illustrate each of the agreements.
5. Teach and model the norms throughout the day.

Debriefing (Reflection/Closure)

1. Ask students to respond to the following questions:

   - What worked well in this activity?
   - What norms did we follow?
   - What could we do next time to work better together?

Activity #2
Template for Procedures Lesson

Setting out expectations for how the classroom will operate helps students to understand their role in the learning process. You can work with your students to create procedure charts for common classroom routines such as:

- Group work
- Lining up
- Transition times
- Unfinished homework
- Student-to-student disagreements
- Turning in papers
- Heading papers
- Individual work
- Activity centers

This activity helps to share the responsibility for an orderly classroom among students and teachers.

Lesson Preparation

Grades: K-12
Duration: 5-20 minutes
Grouping: Whole class
Materials: Chart paper or tag board, markers
Objectives: To establish, model, and reinforce classroom procedures and routines
Assessment: Student participation and following through with classroom procedures

Lesson Delivery

Briefing: Explain objectives of lesson to students so that they will help you to create a procedure for a classroom routine (e.g., "Today we are going to think about how we line up for recess. What would that look like?").

Instructional Frame

1. Ask students to develop the steps: "When it is time to line up, what do we do first? What is the second step?"

2. Continue asking students to sequence the steps, as you write these procedures on a chart.

Sample Lining Up Procedures

1. Put work away.
2. Push chair in, and stand behind chair.
3. Wait for signal from line leader to go to line (by table group).
4. Quiet voices until you reach the playground.

Activity #3
Educator Reflection—Mismatches in Cultural Expectations

Use this activity to understand and celebrate the differences that may exist among students that reflect their varying cultures.

Directions

1. In a small group, read the vignette and discuss the "Questions for Reflection."
2. Review the chart on "Individualist Perspective/Collectivist Perspective."
3. Answer the "Discussion Questions" with your colleagues.
4. Would you change any of your answers on the vignette based on what you've learned?

Vignette: Mismatches in Cultural Expectations

In a linguistically diverse, urban neighborhood, parents (and their preschool children) remained with their elementary school children during the school's morning breakfast program. During that time, the students shared their food with their family members. School administrators and teachers felt that the parents were taking advantage of the subsidized breakfast program. Stating that parents were violating federal and district guidelines, administrators decided to close the school doors to the parents in the mornings. Parents protested the action, and teachers felt that the breakfast incident was another example of the school's failure to foster parental involvement.

Questions for Reflection

1. What beliefs might the parents have had that led to their decision to stay at school and eat breakfast with their children?
2. What beliefs might have guided administrators when they prohibited the parents and siblings from

eating breakfast with their school-age children?

3. How did the school personnel and the parents judge each other?

4. How might the situation been dealt with differently by school personnel taking cultural perspectives into account?

Discussion Questions–"Individualist Perspectives/Collectivist Perspectives"

1. What makes sense to you about the expectations in the "Individualist Perspective" column?

2. What makes sense to you about the expectations in the "Collectivist Perspective" column?

3. Elaborate on some of the expectations and explain why you agree or disagree with them as an educator. What factors from your own cultural background might influence your opinions?

4. What kinds of conflicts might occur in a classroom because of these different cultural values? How might you deal with such conflicts? What might you do in your classroom to allow for different cultural values?

The LAB at Brown University. *The Diversity Kit: An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education, Part II: Culture* (Providence, RI: Education Alliance at Brown University, 2002), 25-26.

Individualist Perspective	Collectivist Perspective
Student should "achieve her potential" for the sake of self-fulfillment.	Student should "achieve her potential" in order to contribute to the social whole.
Student should work independently and get his own work done. Giving help to others may be considered cheating.	Student should be helpful and cooperate with his peers, giving assistance when needed. Helping is not considered cheating.
Student should be praised frequently. The positive should be emphasized whenever possible.	Student should not be singled out for praise in front of her peers. Positive feedback should be stated in terms of student's ability to help family or community.
Student should attain intellectual skills in school; education as schooling.	Student should learn appropriate social behaviors and skills as well as intellectual skills; education as upbringing.
Student should engage in discussion and argument in order to learn to think critically (constructivist model).	Student should be quiet and respectful in class because he will learn more this way (transmission model).
Property belongs to individuals, and others must ask to borrow or share it.	Most property is communal and not considered the domain of an individual.
Teacher manages behavior indirectly or emphasizes student self-control.	Teacher has primary authority for managing behavior, but also expects peers to guide each other's behavior.
Parent is integrally involved with student's academic progress.	Parent believes that it is teacher's role to provide academic instruction to student.

Activity #4
Educator Reflection—Power Relationships

Social change in education requires us to examine the relationships between individuals and groups. The following activity provides research on this issue and a real-life perspective into how that research plays out. Use it with a group of your colleagues or as an individual reflection to improve your practice.

Directions

1. Read "Historical Power Relations and Their Impact on Development and Learning."
2. Read the vignette "Letter from Kai James (1998)."
3. Discuss the questions with your colleagues.
4. How can you use what you have heard to make improvements in your classroom?

Historical Power Relations and Their Impact on Development and Learning

Greenfield et al. (1996) and Bartolomé (1995) draw our attention to another key variable in minority child development and learning: the historical power relationships between dominant and non-dominant cultural groups. Frequently, Asian Americans have been touted as the "model minority," that is, as an undifferentiated group, Asian Americans have not experienced the widespread school failure commonly observed among Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and American Indians/Alaska Natives. Ogbu (1994) offers a distinction between voluntary and involuntary minorities. Voluntary minorities are those who freely immigrate to the U.S., such as Asian Americans. Involuntary minorities are those who have been conquered, colonized, or subjugated by the U.S., such as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and American Indian/Alaska Natives. There is a clear parallel between those groups that are involuntary minorities and resulting school failure. For involuntary minorities, participation in public institutions (like schools) that value the culture of the dominant group may result in further loss of culture, language, and power. Thus, in the case of involuntary minorities, it is of utmost importance to create a climate that values students' cultures and that follows culturally responsive pedagogy. Villegas (1991) elaborates:

> A culturally responsive pedagogy builds on the premise that how people are expected to go about learning may differ across cultures.... Cultural differences present both challenges and opportunities for teachers. To maximize learning opportunities, teachers must gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classrooms, then translate this knowledge into instructional practice. (page 13)

Bartolomé (1995) proposes that culturally responsive pedagogy alone is not enough to mediate the effect of historical inequity on involuntary minorities. Bartolomé emphasizes that methods by themselves do not suffice to advance the learning of involuntary minorities. She advocates what she calls "humanizing pedagogy," in which a teacher "values the students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences and creates contexts in which power is shared by students and teachers." This power sharing and valuing of students' lives and cultures may provide a positive counterforce to the negative sociocultural experiences of students; it can enable them to see themselves as empowered within the context of school and allow them to retain pride in their cultural heritages.

VIGNETTE: Letter from Kai James (1998)

Kai James was a freshman in high school when he wrote the following letter.

"Dear High School Teacher"

I am a new high school student, and I am looking forward to these next years of my schooling. I feel the need to write this letter because I seek a different experience in high school from that of elementary school. One of the things I would like to see changed is the relationship between students and teachers. I feel that a relationship that places students on the same level as teachers should be established. By this I mean that students' opinions should be taken serious [sic] and be valued as much as those of teachers, and that together with the teachers we can shape the way we learn and what we learn...

After years of being ignored, what the students need, and in particular what Black students need, is a curriculum that we can relate to and that will interest us. We need appropriate curriculum to motivate us to be the best we can be. We need to be taught to have a voice and have teachers who will listen to us with an open mind and not dismiss our ideas simply because they differ from what they have been told in the past. We need to be made aware of all our options in life. We need to have time to discuss issues of concern to the students as well as the teachers. We must be able to talk about racism without running away from it or disguising the issue. We must also be taught to recognize racism instead of denying it and then referring to those who have recognized it as "paranoid." We also need to be given the opportunity to influence our education and, in turn, our destinies.

We should also be given the right to assemble and discuss issues without having a teacher present to discourage us from saying what we need to say. Teachers must gain the trust of their students, and students must be given the chance to trust their teachers. We need teachers who will not punish us just because they feel hostile or angry. We need teachers who will allow us to practice our culture without being ridiculed...

Discussion Questions:

- What is Kai James asking teachers to do?
- What do you think James' experiences as an African-American student have been like in school?
- Why do you think changing the power structure of schools is important to him?
- After reading this letter, what new thoughts do you have about cultural identity, development, and learning?

The LAB at Brown University, *The Diversity Kit: An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education, Part II.* Culture (Providence, RI: Education Alliance at Brown University, 2002), 27-29.

Activity #5
Student Data-Gathering Instrument

This activity helps to broaden our understanding of what students bring to their education experience that we can build on for student success.

Lesson Preparation

Grades:	4-12
Grouping:	Individual
Materials:	"What I want..." handout (page 2-12)
Objective:	To gather information that will help the teacher understand how students feel about school and learning
Assessment:	Completed questionnaires reviewed by educator

Lesson Delivery

- Have students write their answers to the questions on the handout.
- This a non-graded activity; you are looking for any data that will help you understand the perspectives and experiences of your students. Their responses, however, can give you a sample of their writing skills.
- You can also use the completed activity as a discussion starter with students one-on-one. Selected questions can be used with K-3 students in a discussion.

There are lots of great resources available to help educators connect to an increasingly diverse student population. You can read books like *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook* (Adams, Bell, and Griffin) or *Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning Toward Social Justice* (Kumashiro) to gain a better understanding of the issues or look at Jeanne Gibbs' *Tribes* for more practical strategies to apply in the classroom. Check the resource list in Chapter 8 for these and more materials.

What I Want Most from School This Year

1. What I want most from school this year is _____
2. It would be helpful to me in getting what I want most from school if
   _____
3. The biggest problem I expect to have in getting what I want most from school is
   _____
4. I might be able to overcome this problem if
   _____
5. Some places I might go for help include
   _____
6. I really believe I can get what I want from school if I
   _____

When I Think about School

1. When I think about school my first thoughts are about
   _____
2. My most memorable experiences in school are
   _____
3. What I like most about my present school is
   _____
4. My most painful or disappointing experience in school was
   _____
5. My favorite subject is_____
   because _____
6. The kind of teacher I like most is one who
   _____

When I Am Not at School

1. When I am not at school what I enjoy the most is _____
   because _____
2. When I am not in school I spend most of my time with _____
   because _____
3. Of all the people I know, the one person I admire the most is _____
   because _____
4. If I could have just one wish granted, I would wish for _____
   because _____
5. If I could live any place in the world I would choose_____
   because _____

Adapted from E.R. Hollins, *Culture in School Learning* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996).

Activity #6
Community-Based Projects

This activity can help you learn more about what is happening in your students' communities and what matters most to them.

Lesson Preparation

Grades: K-12
Duration: Two weeks or more
Grouping: Whole class
Materials: Depends on project
Objective: To use academic concepts and skills in meaningful contexts such as community-based projects and/or service learning projects
Assessment: All students complete a community-based project

Lesson Delivery

Briefing:
- Educator investigates possible projects in community such as recycling, taking care of the local environment, tutoring younger students, and volunteer work with community service organizations.
- Educator connects with community stakeholders to obtain feedback on potential projects.
- Explain to students the objectives and rationale for this project.

Instructional Frame

- Teacher presents possible ideas and asks students to brainstorm additional ideas.
- Teacher and students agree on a project.
- Teacher and students co-create a plan to implement project.

Example: Elementary and Middle School

- Teacher and whole class decide to start a recycling program in the school cafeteria.
- Students and teacher decide to which organization earned money will be donated from the recycling program proceeds.
- They work with school administrators and custodians to set up a "recycling center" in the school cafeteria.
- Students create an "infomercial" about the project.
- In teams of 3-4 students each, they go to other classrooms to present the goals of the recycling program and ask for support and participation in the program.
- Students keep track on a weekly basis of amount of recycled materials (plastic, aluminum foil, etc.) by pounds.

Example: High School Science

- Teacher and whole class decide to start a "recycling car oil" program for their Environmental Science class.
- Students coordinate an "Oil Collection Day" in a nearby community location.
- Students make informational posters, flyers, brochures, and public service announcements on radio and television about responsible ways to recycle car oil.
- Students disseminate the information in the community.
- Students organize their teams to staff the Oil Collection Day.

Activity #7
Features of Culture

An example of engaging families as resources for learning is found in the following lesson developed for use by the Peace Corps. The homework activity should be completed by the student with his or her family members, and is appropriate for a variety of grades.

Lesson 2: Features of Culture

Grades: 6-12
Duration: 45-60 minutes for each worksheet
Grouping: Whole class and individual assignments
Materials: Worksheet #1, Features of Culture (page 2-17) and Worksheet #2, Everyone Has a Culture (page 2-18)
Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Explain some of the features of their own culture;
- Describe their impressions of how the culture of the United States and their own culture have shaped them;
- Explain some of the attributes of culture.

Instructions

1. Write the following statements on the board:

   - No one is exactly like me.
   - I have many things in common with the members of my family and community.
   - Every person in the world needs some of the same things I need.

2. Point out to students that people in various groups often look at people in other groups as "different." Ask students whether they have seen this occur in their school or community. If so, why has it happened?

3. Ask students to describe some of these differences. Then ask why people in one group might behave differently from people in another group.

4. Explain that many differences are related to culture—beliefs and ways of living that are handed down from one generation to the next.

5. Working from the statements on the board, explain that all people share basic needs, and ask students for several examples (e.g., food, shelter, love, respect). In addition, each of us learns a set of behaviors and beliefs from the people we grow up with. Ask students for examples (e.g., the manners we're taught, the way we celebrate holidays, how we are expected to behave toward neighbors). Finally, each individual has unique talents and preferences. Again, ask students for examples (e.g., I'm good at math, I'm good at soccer, I don't like chocolate).

6. Explain that when we talk about behaviors and beliefs that a group of people have in common (not individual talents and preferences), we are talking about culture.

7. Now have students look at some of the features of culture. Provide each student with a copy of Worksheet #1, Features of Culture, (see page 2-17). Ask the students to complete the worksheet by filling in an example for each feature of culture. Work through a few of the features with the students to ensure they understand that they are being objective observers of their own taken-for-granted customs.

8. Take the five features of culture that follow and ask students to discuss the following questions about these features:

   - **Celebrations:** What kinds of celebrations are important in your family? In the United States?

- **Greetings:** How do you generally greet people you don't know? People you do know?
- **Beliefs about hospitality:** How do you show hospitality in your community? In your school? In your home?
- **The role of family:** Is there a particular age at which you celebrate an important event in your life with your family or community?
- **Attitudes about personal space and privacy:** How important do you feel it is to have personal space and privacy?

9. Conduct a class discussion: what conclusions can you begin to draw about the culture of the United States? What are your impressions about how U.S. culture has shaped you?

10. Review Worksheet #2, Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone Is Different, with students. For homework, ask students to complete the worksheet. This will help them identify unique aspects of their own culture.

11. When the students return with their homework (Worksheet #2), have them form small groups and compare their homework responses. After the groups compare their responses, ask:
    - Were your responses to the questions exactly alike?
    - What differences did you find among responses?
    - How can you explain the differences?

12. Explain to students that their responses to the worksheet questions were partially shaped by the culture in which they were raised. Make the point that if these questions were given to students from a different culture, their answers would be different because they have grown up in a different culture. Perhaps they have already found significant differences among their small groups.

13. Write this on the board: "Everyone has a culture." It shapes how we see the world, ourselves, and others. Ask students now to address these questions:
    - What is culture?
    - How does it shape the way we see the world, ourselves, and others?

14. Write the word "culture" in bold capital letters across the board. Ask students as a class to come up with a definition. They may find it easier to list aspects of culture—different elements that are true of culture—than to come up with a full definition. Such a list might include:
    - Culture has to do with values and beliefs.
    - Culture involves customs and traditions.
    - Culture is collective, shared by a group.
    - Everyone has a culture.
    - Culture is learned.
    - Culture influences and shapes behavior.
    - Culture is transmitted from generation to generation.
    - Culture is often unconscious; people are sometimes not aware of how their behaviors and attitudes have been shaped by their culture.
    - People in all cultures have common needs.

15. Then provide the following definition: culture is a system of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are shared by a group of

people. It includes customs, language, and material artifacts. These are transmitted from generation to generation, rarely with explicit instructions.

16. Use the following questions to focus discussion on the role culture plays in forming our behavior and beliefs:

    - How do you think you learned your culture?
    - How do you think your culture has shaped you? How has it influenced your values, preferences, and beliefs?
    - Despite the differences in culture in our classroom, what are some things that everyone in our classroom has in common?
    - How does culture shape the way we see the world, ourselves, and others?

Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cros Cultural Understanding. (Peace Corps/Coverdell World Wise Schools, Washington, DC. 2003). http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/

You'll find great ideas for incorporating the cultures of your students as well as cultures from around the world in resources developed by the Peace Corps for their Coverdell World Wise Schools.

Go to http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/ for teacher-friendly materials that will support your curriculum.

Worksheet #1

Features of Culture

Directions: For each feature of culture, think of one example common to people in the United States or in the country where you were born. Use another sheet of paper if you need more space to write.

Styles of dress	Concept of fairness
Ways of greeting people	Nature of friendship
Beliefs about hospitality	Ideas about clothing
Importance of time	Foods
Paintings	Greetings
Values	Facial expressions and hand gestures
Literature	Concept of self
Beliefs about child raising (children and teens)	Work ethic
Attitudes about personal space/privacy	Religious beliefs
Beliefs about the responsibilities of children and teens	Religious rituals
Gestures to show you understand what has been told to you	Concept of beauty
Holiday customs	Rules of polite behavior
Music	Attitude toward age
Dancing	The role of family
Celebrations	General worldview

Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cross-Cultural Understanding. (Washington, D.C.: Peace Corps/Coverdell World Wise Schools, 2003). www.peacecorps.gov/wws/.

Worksheet #2

Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone Is Different

Directions: Respond to each question. Use another piece of paper if you need more space.

1. What languages do you speak?

2. What music do you listen to? What dances do you know?

3. What foods do you eat at home?

4. In your family, what is considered polite and what is considered rude? What manners have you been taught? (Think about such things as table manners, behavior toward guests in your home, what to say when answering the telephone, how to say thanks for a meal.)

5. What do you wear on special occasions?

6. How often do you see your extended family (for example, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins)? What role do they play in your life?

7. What holidays and ceremonies are important in your family?

8. Describe something very important to you. It could be a value, such as respect or honesty. It could be a person, such as a parent, brother, sister, or friend. It could be a goal, such as going to college or designing a Web site. It could be a hobby.

9. Based on what you've written, how would you describe the characteristics of the culture you're a part of?

Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cross-Cultural Understanding. (Peace Corps/Coverdell World Wise Schools, Washington, DC. 2003), www.peacecorps.gov/wws/

Activity #8
Educator Reflection—Parent Interviews

One way to establish good communication with families and parents is to think about the conversations that you have with parents during conferences, home visits, "back-to-school" nights, and other interactions. The list below is a checklist of sorts, with issues to think about in preparing for the conversation and conducting the actual discussion.

Before the interview:

- Does the meeting time allow working parents to attend?
- Is the meeting in conflict with religious or cultural events in the community?
- Have I invited the parent to send a representative, such as an older child, if the parent is unable to attend the interview?
- Have I telephoned those people for whom it would be more common to convey messages orally?
- Have I invited translators and cultural interpreters?

  (Cultural interpreters are people who are familiar with the official and unofficial cultures of the school and the cultures of the home. Cultures here include the meanings, values, and practices that are common not only to the ethnic group from which the parent comes but also to their social class.)
- Do I attempt to hold some meetings with parents in the school and others in community buildings (i.e., community centers or recreational rooms of apartment buildings).
- Have I ensured that the doors of the building are unlocked so that parents can enter?
- Have I learned the correct last name and pronunciation of the parent's name?
- Do I have several examples of the students' work on hand?
- Have I placed signs in appropriate languages, or appointed guides to escort parents to my room?
- Have support staff been made aware that members of the community will be in the school?

At the interview:

- How specific and candid am I in giving a parent information about her child's performance?
- Do I believe in the student's ability to learn?
- Am I conveying that confidence to the parent?
- How clear am I at explaining what I am attempting to do in class?
- Am I using the opportunity to learn about the parent's hopes for his/her child?
- Am I using parents' comments to rethink my teaching strategies?
- Am I giving the parent a chance to ask questions?
- Am I listening/Am I paraphrasing and giving back to the parent my understanding of what is being said?
- Am I allowing time for the parent whose mother tongue is not English, or who speaks a variety of English different from mine, to convey her meaning?
- Am I noting the parent's non-verbal cues?
- Am I using the opportunity to learn from the parent about the strategies which work well with the student in the area of work habits and conduct?

- Am I using the opportunity to discover ways in which the parent might contribute to the student's learning and the life of the school?
- Am I open to the fact that the parents' economic / social reality may make it impossible for them to participate in school life in the traditional ways?
- Am I using the occasion to provide a parent with more information about the school and about their rights as parents, in order to empower them to participate significantly in the life of the school?
- Am I inviting parents to express their expectations of the school?
- Am I inviting a parent to express dissatisfactions and explore conflicts which he or she has experienced with the school?
- Am I using the opportunity to explain the school's race relations policy to parents from all cultural and racial backgrounds?

Irene McGinty and Noni Mendoza-Reis,*Towards Equity: A Guide for Teaching and Learning in a Multicultural Society: Classroom Applications*. (Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1998), 1105-1106.

Activity #9
What's in My Name?

Activities #9 and #10 are opportunities to explore both your own and your students' cultural identities.

Lesson Preparation

Grades:	3-12
Duration:	60 minutes
Grouping:	Whole class
Materials:	"What's In My Name" worksheet (page 2-21)
Objective:	To build community among students
Assessment:	Participation of all students and teacher/ESP

Instructional Frame

1. Day 1: Explain to students that we are going to use our names to learn about each other.
2. Have students complete the worksheet "What's In My Name" as homework.
3. Day 2: Tell students the story of your name. Explain that today they will get to know each other by sharing their own stories. (Based on worksheet: "What's in My Name?").
4. Ask students to share the story of their names by responding to the questions from the assignment.
5. With older students, you may want to share in small groups and have them respond to the "debriefing" questions, then report to the large group.

Debriefing

Ask students to process the activity by responding to the following questions:

- Why do you think it is important to know the stories of our names?
- What do we learn about each other through our names?
- How did we do in this activity?
- How can we work better together?

Jeanne Gibbs, *TRIBES: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*. (Windsor, CA: CenterSource Systems, 2001), 276-277.

Name/Nombre_____ **Date/Fecha**_____

What's in My Name?
¿Qué está en Mi Nombre?

Interview your parents. Then, answer the following questions about your name.

Entrevista tus padres. Luego, contest a las siguientes preguntas sobre tu nombre.

1. Why did your parents choose your name?

   ¿Por qué escogieron tus padres tu nombre?

2. If you were named after someone, who was it?

   ¿Te nombraron por alguna persona? ¿Quién?

3. Do you like your name? Why or why not?

   ¿Te gusta tu nombre? ¿Por qué? o ¿Por qué no?

4. If you could choose another name, what would it be? Why?

   Si tuvieras la oportunidad de cambiar tu nombre, ¿Cuál nombre escogerías? ¿Por qué?

Jeanne Gibbs, *TRIBES: A New Way of Learning and Being Together* (Windsor, CA: CenterSource Systems, 2001), 276-277.

Activity #10
"I am from…" Statements

This activity builds on the exploration of cultural identities and incorporates writing skills.

Lesson Preparation

Grades: 6-12
Duration: 60 minutes
Grouping: Whole class
Materials: Paper, pencils, copy of "I Am From…"matrix, "I am from..." statement on either overhead or chart paper
Objectives:
- Help students examine the variety of cultural factors that shape them
- Learn more about your students

Assessment: Completion of "I am…" statement by all students and the teacher/ESP

Lesson Delivery

Briefing:

- Explain purpose of lesson to students
- Point out that each of us is influenced by a variety of factors in our lives
- Focus of activity is expression and creativity vs. punctuation and grammar

Instructional Frame

1. Show students a sample of an "I am from" statement. (Your own, or see sample below).
2. Show students matrix of sample categories/factors.
3. Ask students if they have any more categories to add to matrix.
4. Give students time to write their own "I am from" statements.
5. Students share their statements at tables.
6. Students discuss ways their statements were alike and different.

Debriefing

Process this activity by asking students the following:

- How are you like your classmates?
- How are you different from your classmates?
- What did you learn about your classmates?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn that surprised you?

I AM FROM…

Southern ways
Music
Soul food
People of all shades
Slaves
Bright colors
Loud voices
Concerts
"Go on Girl"
Sweet potato pie and
Turkey in the oven
Chitterlings on the stove
stinking up the house
Dancing all night
Racism and small slights.

(W. Gary, October 2001)

"I am from…" Matrix
Category/factors

Places	Events
Products	Phrases
Food	Smells
People	Sounds
Common things	Sights
Pictures	Ouches